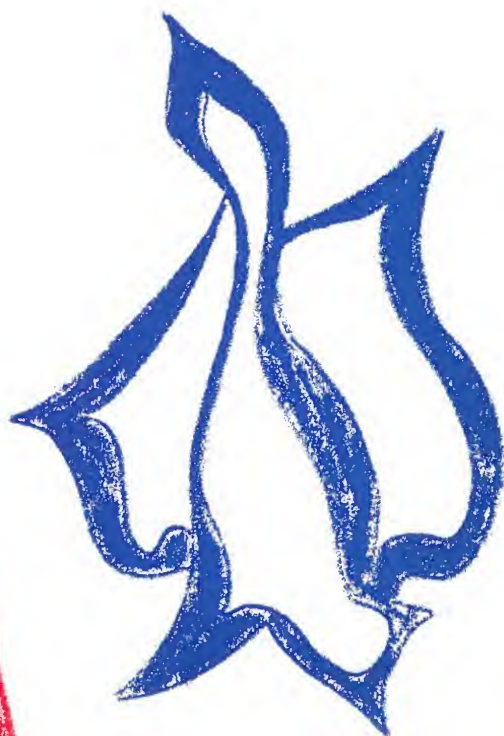


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SAINT JOSEPH'S
COLLEGE
SPRING
1966






st. joseph's college

spring



measure



measure



EDITOR

Ronald Staudt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Philip Deaver

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Raymond Leliaert

MODERATOR

Rev. Alvin Druhman

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Raymond Sweigart

ILLUSTRATIONS

Raymond Sweigart

Michael Delaney

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to kill a home

by Steve

Finn



fog hung over the land in the usual five o'clock fashion, the lights of the land would not glow for another three hours. the indian summer day had fallen late in november, convertible tops were lowered and there was speculation that winter had forgotten bedford this year. bedford which was 35 miles outside of new york city and like any of the many suburbs which encircled the city of new york; it had bigtown nearness but smalltown farness.

thanksgiving vacation would bring last year's high school seniors; this year's new intellectuals. they would all return, they would appear sophisticated and assured, they would walk and talk a little slower, but they would, for the first time in two months, feel secure.

the little white box over head flashed in small red letters — Please Fasten Seat Belts, No Smoking — as the big robust 727 approached the hard cold cement of the J.F.K. International Airport runways.

"all passengers will please leave by the rear doors, we are sorry but the direct terminal loading gates are not in working order. please be careful and thank you for flying american airlines."

dean looked away from the window which had received his attention for the last 35 minutes and slowly moved with the other passengers to the terminal center. he went straight from the baggage claim outside to hail a cab.

"hotel americana please"

dean again gave all his attention to the window of the cab.

dean brought the gearshift straight up as the tiny blue tr-4 went into the turn. the engine hung for about three seconds before the gearshift came slamming back to 4th, giving more than the needed amount of power to complete the turn. dean smiled at the swirling hair of the girl seated next to him.

room 318 of the hotel americana looked out over 52nd street. as dean walked in he felt an abrupt sense of loneliness. like most other good hotel rooms, room 318 was neat, modern, and gave an important feeling to its user. dean focused his eyes on the white phone on the night table.

hi darling, what are you doing this afternoon? good we can go for a ride, i'll pick you up at five.

dean unpacked, showered and went downstairs to eat. everything seemed so intangible. in two months things had changed so much, but really everything had changed in a few seconds. it had for dean and he was sure it had for her. he hadn't wanted to start college after the accident but his parents said there was nothing he could do for her now. dean went to college 4 days after the accident, not having seen her only knowing that she was expected to live. he wanted only time to explain but he knew you can't explain a few seconds of carelessness. he knew it would do her no good now. tonight

he would have to explain; as dean stepped outside he wanted to walk the 42 blocks to saint vincent's hospital, knowing if he started he would never make it and not wanting to make it. as the cab neared the hospital dean was thinking of her and their plans. walking down the long gray hall to room 574 he thought of the past, of the scream as they came out of the turn into the line of an oncoming car, the police, her parents, the looks, the questions and his parents. standing in front of room 574, he knocked and heard her sweet voice
"come in"

he went for the doorknob but hesitated for a few seconds. stepping outside into the darkness of the night, he thought about going to bedford where he knew security, and where she had known security.

the big city papers of new york ran three lines on page 65 about the death of a bedford girl. it stated that she died of injuries suffered in an automobile accident two months ago.

winter finally came to bedford, most people said they knew it would. dean knew it had come and he knew it would stay a long time.

THE EVENING EDITION

*See the pretty headlines in pretty black and white;
See the pretty stories in columns straight and tight;
See the pretty words just brimming from the core
Of pretty little death
In pretty little war.*

*We see in story one of pretty Viet Nam
Of how the people die because of pretty bomb.
Pretty, pretty story in middle of page two
Says lookie! lookie! Daddy
Niggers dying too!*

*Now story time is over, hasn't it been fun
To read of funny stories
And see how friends have fun?*

by Gerald Heimann

ONE BLOCK

FROM THE DRUGSTORE



by
Philip
Deaver

"We have kept the feasts, heard
the masses,
We have brewed the beer and
cyder,
Gathered wood against the winter,
Talked at the corner of the fire,
Talked not always in whispers,
Living and partly living."

T. S. Eliot,
Murder in the Cathedral

A train ride. You are on a
train, and the train rocks and rum-
bles and rolls. And down the tracks
you go, across someone's farm-
land, into someone's hometown,

then another, and another, and on and on, past the millions of stories that you will never hear, past the people who know each other and who don't, past the weary smiles and the troubled smiles, past the millions living side by side that you can never hope to know. Through your window you see only faceless groups and motherless puzzle-eyed crowds, with an occasional rubber robot carrying a grocery-sack. The stories outside your window are little stories to you. They mean nothing. The newspapers and the radio — they tell a few stories, if they really need telling. But the million you pass on your trip from where you were to where you are going, those stories you'll never hear. And you aren't sorry. You don't wonder about them. You have your own story. The people in the seats around you have their own stories. So each face stares blankly out the window into the gray-matter world outside, and the eyes skim across country-sides and people and trees and apartments — and rarely blink, and rarely shift to take another glimpse. You have your own story. You have your own story.

And then the brakes squeek and you feel the train slowing, slowing and finally halting. And then people are getting on and off. People come and go in all small towns — get on, get off, go in, come out, arrive, depart. And while you wait your window grants you a view of downtown — a quick one, for there are schedules to meet. There's the drugstore. And

the barbershop — probably hasn't changed in years. There's a courthouse — flag's flying out in front. There are men here and there on the sidewalks; there's one with a briefcase — a lawyer — maybe the mayor — the train begins to roll again — maybe just a business man — faster — I wonder — and the small town like many small towns with people like all people fades, and you go back to your own story, leaving behind many littler tales a civilization thick.

On the train you have the common perspective. You ignore uniqueness. You ignore the individual. You have your own story, and you don't want the blank faces around you in your story. And they don't want in. So you're safe in your window seat.

Oh, yes. In that town you just came through there was one story that might interest you. Remember the drugstore? About a block on the other side of that establishment (out of sight from the railroad tracks), lost in a maze of many other little houses, there's a certain little brown house. It's about two blocks from the school house, four blocks from the neighborhood candy store, a block and a half from the tracks, and about two miles from the older municipal cemetery. About thirteen years ago Paul Smith lived there — in the little brown house. He was a car salesman in town. This probably doesn't interest you, I know, but try to listen. Mr. Smith wasn't doing at all well in May of 1953. Most of the people in town didn't

know that, but it's true. Then one May afternoon, May 15, a Tuesday, the whole little unimportant story of Paul Smith and his family of four changed a bit. His little Marjorie was six years old then. She was sitting in class, first grade, in the third row, a few seats down from someone else. And she had her hand up.

"Margy, you'll have to come up here if you want to ask me something. Don't bother everyone else, dear."

"Everyone" was coloring in balloons, preferably, but not in all cases, with the color that corresponded with the word just below each balloon. Margy pattered up to the big brown desk at the head of the room, smiling because she always smiled, but clearly puzzled about something.

"Miss Wiley, what color does this say?"

She held up a crayon with the color-label before her teacher, the usual grey-haired, chubby, short, gold-hearted first grade teacher who taught before the very beginning of time itself, and who has an eternity of patience to prove it.

"Chartreuse dear. You won't need it for your balloons, I don't believe."

Marjorie Smith pattered back to her seat. And then the bell was ringing and the books were closing and the crayons were being put back into their well-worn yellow and green boxes. And the boys were starting to talk and laugh and make faces, and one gave a pigtail

a jerk unforgettable for anyone who wasn't used to it. But it was time to be quiet, or that fat old lady wasn't going to say, "You're excused."

"You're excused."

And Marjorie began her little-girl type, leaf-kicking, meandering, lazy-summer-day-walk home. And she was alone.

Ronnie Smith was starting home, too. But he usually stopped off at the little store across the street from the school. It was just a place where the kids could buy penny candy. The city council had made exception to the zoning laws in order to set the little place up at its particular location. Some parents had worried about the traffic uptown and that railroad tracks endangering the children when they stole their way into the business district to buy a stick of licorice behind parental backs. Ronnie was in the third grade, "old enough to ride a two-wheeler, so ha, ha," and he had been dreaming about that candy since after the afternoon recess. The whole neighborhood gang usually went together, all on their bikes, taking complete command of an entire street because they didn't know anything about the right side; and it was kind of daring to ride in the street, anyway.

But Curty Pyle and Ronnie were the closest of buddies. Right after school on this particular day, after the purchase at the candy store, Curty and Ronnie were talking as they got on their twenty-six inchers . . .

"Ronnie, does your dad ever shoot anybody?"

"Nah, he never gets the chance. But he would. He said he would if somebody tried something on him."

Thirteen years ago all third graders, it seems, talked like Gene Autry. The boys got on their bikes, each with a stick of red licorice in his mouth, and headed home. Ronnie's dad was Paul Smith, civic leader, your friendly local Plymouth dealer, and, of late, part-time city policeman. And so naturally third-grader Ronnie Smith wanted his father to be known as a policeman among the boys. He didn't see his dad as the poor businessman who was closer to broke than he told anyone. He didn't see his dad as the member of the school board who was receiving criticism for being too much "all go" for the newly suggested high school building program, a "pretty damn radical plan" for a small-town without at least eight years to think about it. To Ronnie, who just decided to go over to Curty Pyle's for a glass of milk and a cookie, his father was a policeman. And all the kids knew that that made Ronnie's dad tougher than theirs. So Ronnie was proud of his father.

Marjorie was just going in the front door of the brown house a block and one half from the railroad tracks.

"Mother! Ronnie went to the store again. He and Curty went . . ."

There was a grocery bag on

the living room floor, torn and spilled. Marjorie noticed it, pulled a package of cookies from the mess, and started to open the package, still tattling on her brother.

". . . went there again and he didn't come straight home like you said!"

The house was quiet. Strange. The house was never quiet. Six year old Marjorie Smith put down the cookie package and began to walk toward the kitchen. And then suddenly there was a pale-faced, wild-eyed, breathlessly dazed woman standing over Marjorie and Marjorie was crying.

The woman grabbed the little girl's arm and sharply turned her toward the door. "Run, Marjorie," and giving her a push, "Run to Pyle's and stay there. Run!" Her whisper was slow and icy and as pale as her face.

And little Marjorie Smith felt her mother's trembling hand and ran, crying harder than little girls should have to cry, leaving coloring books and crayon box, home and mother. And when the front door slammed shut, Mrs. Smith sank to the floor in that little brown house out of sight from the railroad tracks and began with face in hands to scream because husband Paul Smith was in the kitchen hanging from the back door.

Some people can rationalize death better than others. And, then, of course, there is the problem of how close you are to the deceased, how well you knew the fellow. No one who rushed by on the

train with his own story was particularly bothered when he saw the blurred line of cars just turning into the older municipal cemetery outside of town. Of course, by the time that the train gets out there, it's picked up enough speed to make the glimpse a short one. And, of course, the preacher has the burden of having to be wise at times like these. That requires a good deal of rationalization. But he is a capable man and he manages, at least enough to look into the bewildered, lonely eyes of a staggered widow and say, "Life must go on Mrs. Smith."

"Hell! Maybe it will and maybe it won't. That's a damn stupid thing to say!"

Thirteen years have passed. College junior Ronald Smith is in a college atmosphere, minus bike, father, and licorice.

"You can't just say something like that without backing it up! I say love comes with time, and I don't see how you can prove me wrong. You keep saying, 'So-and-so says . . .'" Who the hell is so-and-so? The trouble with you is . . ."

Ronald has recovered. Now he talks and thinks and acts on the same plane with those around him. He is no different for having lost his father. He has forgotten and recovered. Hurrah for Ronald, the road of life is clear.

And Mrs. Smith became Mrs. Someone else, not because she wasn't sorry that her husband was gone, like someone must have said in the grocery store, not because

the doctor advised it as undoubtedly was projected in the beauty-shop, but, quite simply, because she was lonely and strong and young, and she knew that "life must go on," though she had come to hate the words. She moved out of the brown house, out of the neighborhood that would "never forget the day", and tried, honestly tried, and succeeded as a reward for trying, to allow life to go on.

Marjorie.

"Well, hello, dear. I haven't seen you since — oh my, it's just been such a long time. You certainly have grown up haven't you?"

"Yes, mam, I guess. It's been a . . ."

"Oh and your brother is in college, too, hummmmm?"

"Yes, he likes . . ."

"Oh, he likes it, well, that's just so fine, isn't it? He's such a nice boy, isn't he? Yes. My husband — Earl — why, he always said it would turn out OK. You are such good folks. Oh, that's just so . . ."

Marjorie smiled all the time. But sometimes it was hard. She hated her father's death. In the little town no one could forget. Marjorie could smile just as fresh and clear as when she was six years old. But she didn't want to try to smile. She was tired of that.

But you are on the train, watching the houses go by. You have your own story. You are safe. Marjorie Smith is about three seats behind you.

Selections
by Daniel Tighe

Thoughts on my Childhood

I was just like other kids of my time, devoted to my toys and quite mischievous. I remember I had a silly little stuffed bear, and I would never let it out of my sight. At night I would pretend to protect it and by doing so I felt brave, so very brave. We would go for big camping trips into the jungles of Africa, the forests of Canada and the mountains of California. He was not like the giant grizzly bears we had hunted in the North for he was a little brother, somebody who needed me when I needed somebody. I hated people in a strange way, I know now that my parents were just people and they meant nothing then. When I was scared and left alone I did not want my bear to fear even though that feel-

ing filled me. We did not go to all the places we had frequented before. But slowly my friend became further apart from me. More increasingly I left him home when I went on my adventures. One morning when I had just turned five, I awoke to find him removed from his pillow next to me. I started to cry, but my tears ceased when I spied him setting on top of my chest of drawers. I ran to him and called him names under my breath, I called him a traitor and threw him into the waste basket. From then on I loved my mother more than I had ever loved my bear. She said I was a big boy, I believed her. And then she sent me to school. I cried then too, and I called her a traitor.

Two Days Ago

I slept at a friend's house that night and for many nights to follow. I had demanded my little sister remain at school where she had been going prior to the accident. She hated to, for now that we were the only ones left, she wanted to be with me, but I could do her no good so I left it to the Sisters.

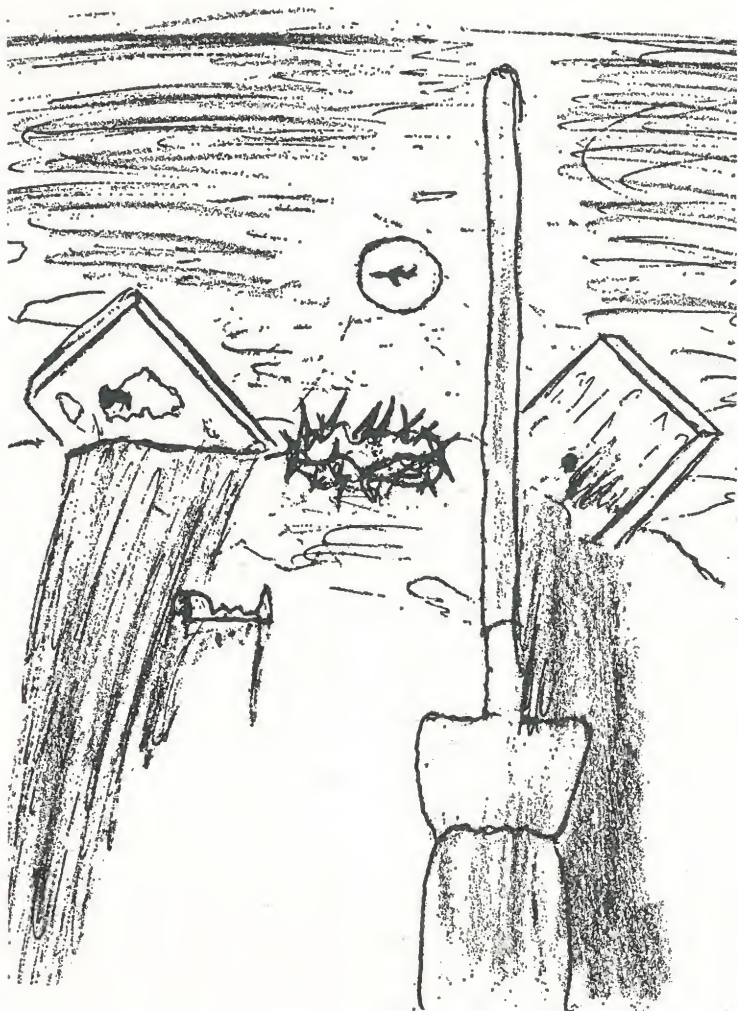
The relatives extended their grief at the loss of my parents and four brothers, but none of them had never been close to me, and it meant little. I suppose the relationship was more my doing, than anyone else's, for I never did like the ones on my father's side and never saw the five on my mother's side.

I had to leave school and try to settle the affairs of the family. This was a bit difficult at first both because of the deaths and because I was twenty-one with no legal experience. My father was well covered and there were small insurance policies on all the members of the family, so all the expenses were taken care of, with money to live on. One problem that arose was that of my father's assets and debts. Then later I was able to pay off from the insurance, but since the house we lived in was not ours we never saw the money for it. It seems that he had some

money almost everywhere and it was embarrassing at times trying to collect it. I had to talk to the men that he worked with and find out where he banked. Then the sticky situation opening the account to me. This went on with stocks and still I think there is something that I have overlooked. All in all, it took two years to clear all the known accounts up.

In this whole process there were several things that happened which I was sort of proud of. For example, the family car. It turned out there were several payments left on it, and I decided that what I could get for selling it was less than the payments, so I let the bank claim it. This and several other moves, though to the businessman average, surprised me, for I thought it had been handled rather well. My friends thought it mercenary.

Ten years have passed since then and my sister is married to a rather nice fellow and has had one child. Myself, I have never married and for that matter never went back to school. I traveled quite a bit in the first years and then settled down on a farm which I got on back taxes. Here I write when I feel like it and mostly don't get published. I don't think I have ever loved anything or anyone but my sister since that night and now that she is married and has her family, I find myself loosing sight of her. Two days ago at sunset I walked in the back field and decided then that I have lived much too long.



God --

**Supreme Being of the
Judeo-Christian World
-- Dies**

Southwestern Seaboard, U.S.-A., — "God, the Supreme Being of the Judeo-Christian world, is dead," was the tragic announcement made by Walter Kronkite last night on the six o'clock news. "He was very old."

Different causes, complicated by serious neglect, had contributed to His death. He had been on the "critical list" for many decades and was not expected to live.

Surviving Him are many sects and large denominational churches. All expressed deep regret upon hearing of His death, and said that they would miss Him very much. Funeral services were not announced.

God spent His early life quietly. He first gained recognition when He created the world. The *Bible*, a history of God which many of His followers helped to write under His direction, reports this episode. It states that, in God's original plan, He made the world, made man, and placed man in charge of the world. It's a long story, and space does not allow further explanation.

Some scholars today deny that God ever existed, and state that he was merely a fabrication of man's mind. Ludwig Feuerbach, a leading intellectual in the previous century, believed that God was simply a projection of the human mind. According to Feuerbach, "Man needed God and so created Him. God really never existed."

Naturally this opinion was challenged by intellectuals who believed God really lived. They did acknowledge, however, that he was more important in past ages.

The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre has stated, "In primitive society and the middle ages, God

by Charles Herber

was more necessary than today. Men did not have, then, the instruments to conquer sickness, wars and poverty. Today men have these, so recently God's importance had lessened."

Leading statesmen and businessmen were among the many who said that they would miss God. In Washington the President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson, stated, "God was never really appreciated or used as well as He could have been. He might have been a more effective force in making men honest and more ready to obey laws and pay taxes."

God began his career in Asia Minor. In the days of the Roman Empire, He reached the height of His success. He began His climb in Asia Minor by forming a solid group of followers who were Palestinian rebels. They spread His kingdom everywhere, and, in doing so, produced some of the most fas-

cinating pages in history. Their revolutionary goals were forcefully stated in several writings called the "gospels." They followed these writings religiously. The movement in some way appealed to something very deep in the man of the Roman times. Because of His immense popularity, God was the central figure of history for several centuries.

When the Christians, the name given to the followers of God, eventually gained power, their religious zeal lessened, and they came into conflict with God. As one leading spokesman put it, "God is irrelevant. His kingdom is located in another world. We want to live and enjoy life and not be worried about some far away world. I just don't see how He applies to everyday living."

With the growth of cities, wealth and armies, God was slowly pushed out of the picture. He became even more obscure with the coming of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the growth of science.

God had become so withdrawn from the world that reporter Friedrich Nietzsche said, "God is dead." This statement raised some

consternation, but it was passed over as false reporting. It did cause people to wonder, however, if God were ailing.

Then recently, theologians informed the public that He wasn't feeling well and was not expected to live much longer.

Upon His death, condolences were sent by leaders of the world. Said James *Breznev* of the U.S.S.R., "I never knew Him, but I'm sure He was an influence for the good."

At the United Nations, the flags were flown at half-mast. Arther *Goldburg*, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., stated solemnly, "The world will not be the same without Him."

In a concluding statement to the press, President Lyndon Baines Johnson drawled, "The Great Society will miss God," but he was certain, "that religion had enough vitality to overcome this great loss."

At a recent interview, one of the relatives of God broke into tears. He said that he had gone out into the streets to inform the people that God had died. People just couldn't understand him when he told them about God's tragedy. They never heard of God.

And Yet . . .

Do you know at what turn
 of the tick
Will you meet the calming wind?
You proud sailor of the gilded galleon
 failing Eagle's Flight,
Tack seaward with your feasting bark
Past the wharf of tethered yellow days.
 Do you know
Sucking time beckons out from the quay?
The fog's horn echoes the angelus for you
 and your blind mates;
And yet you haul the rage aloft
To snap in a last desperate breeze.
 To Pluto's palace
The ghosted flaging mast leads
The palling purple sheets.
And yet you
In the glow of the blood-red moon
Cling to the regent's colors
 while sinking
To the waxing depths
 of love's
 last
 hallow.

Raymond
Braun

mary j pursley
award
winner

THOMAS



by David D'Avignon

"Thomas!" the woods whispered an echo back to her.

Ma Simpson was an older woman just beginning to feel the weight of years on her gingham-covered, faded body. She had seen many things in her years but could not figure out where Thomas was off to now.

A hushed breeze calmed the countryside, and the sun emitted its dimmest rays as it was swallowed by the mountains to the West. Suspicious grey clouds could be seen in the distance by an eye pessimistic or keen enough to observe them.

Ma remembered when little Thomas was born. That was a still evening, similar to this one with cool orangeness in the twilight and in the changing trees. She walked around to the back of the sagging, unpainted, oaken structure which was her home.

"Thomas!" Ma's powerful voice once more disturbed the countryside. "Where is that boy? He's supposed to be chopping this wood," she asked of the woodpile.

Leaves fell in front of her face as she moved across the barnyard. "Everything has changed so," she told the worn path that aimed toward the road to town.

Kentucky seemed strange even though it was where she had raised

her son. It used to be as serene as her childhood home in southern Indiana. But the tranquility ended with the advent of the distant thunder which a passer-by had told her was Union artillery. Ma did not know what "Union" was; she thought about the time when a man from someplace called Virginia came to talk to her husband about some thing called "the Confederacy."

"That was three years ago," she reassured herself and wondered why she had not heard from her husband, not noticing that the sun had left the sky. "Thomas was thirteen then and wanted so much to go with Pa. But he was just a baby."

"Thomas!" she called into the empty barn. The startling screech of a nearby owl split the subsequent silence. Ma turned her back to the barn. Her eyes fell upon the darkening path as the twilight weakened and the tall grass began to bend with moisture. "That grass is so tall."

"Thomas is tall," she moved toward the path. More leaves fell in her face. "He has grown in the last three years. Mamma's little helper is just what the farm needs while Pa is away. Look at all the work to be done, and Thomas is a strong boy."

Ma stood in the middle of the barnyard as leaves continued to fall in the strengthening breeze. The twilight gave place to a full autumn moon. When Ma realized that the time was late, she abandoned the barnyard and crossed

the rickety foot-bridge putting the path under her feet. The breeze increased its force, slowing somewhat Ma's pace.

Ma did not notice; her eyes were busy scanning the unkept fields that used to grow corn. Captured by an unseen, unfelt magnetism that drew them onward, Ma's legs could not forward the weariness abstracted from their uphill journey. Every now and then the grass would rustle as a nearby pheasant took flight or some other bewildered animal sensed a frenzy that was not solely his own.

"Thomas," Ma stopped and whispered, wanting to disbelieve her eyes. The breeze died down.

"Thomas!" she gasped as she was now sure. Ma abandoned the path and forced her way through an obstinate thicket which told her to go back. But Ma was obstinate too. When she reached the coated figure which its arms extended, she felt the weariness of her legs and fell to the ground.

"You scarecrow," face to face she addressed the fallen figure. "You're not what I want. Have you seen my Thomas?"

All was silent.

Ma rolled over on her back and looked up at the sky. Shooting from atop of a low branch of a nearby oak, the piercing gaze of a grotesque owl disturbed Ma's wondering if the stars could hear her. Ma concentrated on the stars, but the ancient owl challenged her thought.

"What do you want? It might've been my Thomas! What

do you know?" Ma rose to her knees, grabbed a stone, rose to her feet and threw with all her wrath. The defeated bird left her with the oncoming crickets which were now louder than the Union artillery.

"Thomas!" Ma now yelled into, almost damning the darkness — half beckoning her son, half to quiet the increasing mockery of the maddening insects.

"Thomas, Thomas," the cold darkness echoed the cry back at Ma's unhearing ears.

Satisfied with the silence, Ma found the path and continued her search. Clouds began to form, dimming the light of the full moon. Ma's legs could no longer feel their weariness — they fell into the sequential movement of unconcerned pendulums as one rested while the other subjected to the dictates of time. So they exchanged chores as Ma moved farther from her farm. The breeze regained its former force and once again slowed Ma's pace, but Ma paid no attention to it and saw shelter in the approaching woods.

Two squirrels froze in the path as a dark figure approached from the direction of the open land. The woods swayed in the breeze as Ma entered their boundaries. The crickets increased their cry, and the two sentinels scurried up a nearby oak, heeding the restless forewarning that electrified the air.

"Come back! You critters seen my Thomas?"

The squirrels disappeared into a hole halfway up the gigantic oak.

The breeze turned into a whistling wind.

"Cowards! My Thomas ain't like you. He's a strong boy what ain't afraid of nothin'," Ma shouted above the wind.

The wind increased.

"Thomas!" Ma projected her verbal beacon, penetrating both the wind and the distances of undergrowth which were inaccessible to sight. Her eyes widened as the filtered moonlight greyed the once multi-colored leaves — the fallen leaves on the animal-trodden ground and the stronger ones precariously dangling, inviting a shift of wind to snap their last hold to stability.

"The woods never seemed so dark before," Ma sighed, leaning back and noticing that the clouds were forming in the skies. "My stars are gone. Who will hear me? Who will help me find my Thomas?"

The wind continued; so did Ma.

Nearing the end of the path, Ma spotted a tree stump next to the road to town. "I'll set myself next to yonder tree and rest awhile, then I'll go and find my Thomas," Ma declared interrupting her quest, noticed only by the wild creatures who seemed to know her, yet kept their distance.

The wind ceased, the moon peeked in and out of the clouds, and the stars, unseen by Ma, drifted across the sky. Ma's senses drifted with them. A dream visited her: she was sitting under a spreading shade tree in front of a red

brick schoolhouse. A green meadow with butterflies and spring flowers loomed in the background, and children were playing in its fertile warmth. As she sat smiling and watching, the schoolmaster approached . . .

"You all right, Mam?"

Ma's wakening eyes could discern the figure of a young man on a grey gelding.

"Thomas?"

"You all right, Mam? You shouldn't be out here this time of night." The young man dismounted holding his gelding's reins in one hand, helping Ma to her feet with the other.

Ma's widening eyes once more became accustomed to the darkness. She could see that the young man was a stranger. She stood, tranced, looking into the eyes that smiled from behind the dark rim of his grey hat.

"You all right, Mam?"

"Have you seen my little Thomas?"

"Ain't seen no one, Mam; and I've been riding quite awhile. Looks like a storm brewing tonight, Mam; you'd better head home while you still have time."

"Have you seen my little Thomas? He didn't come home for supper tonight. He's s'posed t' be home choppin' the wood." Ma remembered the woodpile, and her voice quivered.

"Take it easy, Mam; when's the last time you saw the boy?"

"He wasn't home f' supper." Ma's voice weakened to almost a whisper.

"I'd like to help you, Mam; but I've got to get to town. If you'll tell me what the boy looks like, I'll send him home if I see him. Now tell me what your little Thomas looks like, and then you'd better head back home."

"Can't go back home. Thomas is a big boy! He left after supper — he and Pa. Got t' find him."

"Well if he's with his Pa, you shouldn't worry about him, Mam. They're both all right. Now you head back home, hear; I don't want to worry about you." The stranger mounted his horse and waited for a reply.

Ma shook her head in consent and whispered. "Got t' find my Thomas."

The young stranger took command of the gelding. "Don't worry none, Mam," and departed sending confused wild-birds into unwanted flight.

The crickets again renewed their cry.

"Those critters caught up t' me again." Ma told the spot where the stranger had stood. "I'd better get t' town t' find my little baby."

"Thomas!" Ma's cry awoke the stilled winds which were now more intense than before, but Ma would still not listen to their message as they attempted to push her back to the farm. She walked on, into the wind. The sky continued its censuring of the moon's light as the wind-whipped clouds could not agree on a constant direction. The flickering grey shadows from the swaying oak trees vainly tried to

hide the road, but Ma knew where she was going.

The smell of wood-smoke became faintly evident in the weakening wind. Ma's aged nostrils caught the scent of town, and her body became stronger as the road began a slight upward incline. The wind grew weaker as Ma neared the crest of the hill. The crickets shouted. The oaks on each side of the road shuttered as the cold, dying wind breathed its last gust of restraining fury.

Ma fought her way to the road's summit and stopped. The wind almost blew her over; it pulled at her hair and made her gingham dress cling at her legs. Ma's squinting eyes looked at the foggy town which was sleeping under a blanket of mist. She tried to call to her son, but her wind-dried mouth would emit no sound. Her legs remained faithful, and she began her descent . . .

The saloon was the oldest building in town. Rumors had it that Daniel Boone himself had built it, but that was a long time ago. It now shone forth in an array of fresh paint that made it the pride of the town, especially after sundown.

A young man in a grey hat pushed open the swinging doors and stepped into the street. He was accompanied by a balding man who wore a badge and walked with a limp. They laughed at unimportant things as they walked down the street. When they reached an oak-en hitching to which a grey gelding was tethered, the young man

caught a glimpse of a figure on the far side of the street.

"That woman," he said pointing to the bent-over shadow aimlessly moving along the wooden sidewalk, "I know her from somewhere."

"What are you talking about?" The man with the badge was startled. "That's just old Ma Simpson; she's out of her head."

"What was that?" The young man was watching the figure disappear and did not hear his companion's declaration.

"She's crazy. Off and on for pretty near ten years now, ever since the war ended, Ma Simpson's been coming to town looking for her son. The boy never came back from the war: neither did his old man. It was just too much for Ma, and her mind seemed to up and

stop. She lives 'bout seven miles out in an old farm house and doesn't bother no one, so no one bothers . . ."

Ma turned a corner and saw strange buildings. She tried to call her son but a lump in her throat betrayed her loneliness. Since there were no crickets in town, no oaks, no wind — no Thomas, she stopped, looked behind her, turned and slowly started her return to her farm. She stopped again when a distant church bell tolled the early hour and thought she heard a familiar voice.

"Not in town. Maybe at farm?" she hoped and continued her quest homeward.

"Thomas," her whisper crescendoed.

The sleeping town offered no echo.

Jackson Park

Yesterday when I walked home from work
Snow fell like a fog,
Billowed and blew like smoke from a Gary open hearth.

Today the sidewalk dances in the storm of light,
The air is clean,
The sky is as clear as the eyes of a doe.

Tomorrow this same sky will pummel the earth,
The ice and the rock,
With drenching bursts of windswept spite.

On the day to follow, the air will golden glow.
The gray of the ground
And the brown of the bark will crawl behind the green.

Ronald Staudt

The Loan

by

Randall
Ferrari

Ever since Angelo moved in he was always the biggest, toughest kid on the block. Almost every day you could see a dusty crowd in front of Gonzales Taco House watching Angie pound some poor kid. He probably would have been a good athlete but he never stayed with organized sports. Angie played football for a week but then Father Ospolski caught him smoking during lunch.

He never was too bright in school but he managed. He was the kind of guy you always thought should be doing better. But old Angie was a good-looking kid. The girls always giggled and held their hands up by their mouths when Angie walked by with Nick and Pete. At the parish dances Angie always drew a lot of attention. But Angie always wanted to fight, not dance.

He still lives with his ma above Malloy's Bar and Grill. Some

folks thought because Angie's old man ran off with that Irish slut was why he had a chip on his shoulder. Angie sure hated Irishmen.

Tonight was special for Angie. Nick fixed him up with a real nice secretary from the office of the docks where Angie and Nick worked. As he adjusted his tie several times in the small wash-room his mother cried out.

"Where you going to take this girl, Angelo?"

"Ah, out to a play or something. Nick bought the tickets for me."

"Maybe you like her, huh, Angelo? About time you look for some nice girl to marry, huh?"

"I got plenty o' time for that, Ma. Maybe I'll take her to that new club on Lawrence after that show."

Angie mopped his dark brow and adjusted his sports jacket. He bared his even white teeth in a self-complimentary manner.

"Let me see how my boy looks. My, you are a handsome boy."

Angie blushed a little.

"You got your cigarettes, Angelo?"

"Yea, Ma."

"Have a nice time. Maybe tomorrow you can bring the bambina over and I fix ravioli."

"Maybe, Ma. You know I hardly know her."

"Angelo," Mrs. Scarmelli's voice evened out as she handed Angie a small roll of bills, "stay out of trouble, okay?"

"Don't worry, Ma. I'll pay you back Thursday."

"Have a good time, baby."

Mrs. Scarmelli watched Angelo until his polished green coupe roared up the street. Through the gray lace curtains the setting sun shone revealing the minute specks of dust in the air. The sound of the street at twilight drifted into the small apartment. Mrs. Scarmelli eased into the big chair under a picture of the Last Supper and closed her eyes to rest awhile.

The joint wasn't real packed but it was buzzin' pretty good — you know an empty table here and there, but still a good group. We just finished playing "Satin Doll." Man that tune brings it out in me. Anyway, I'm feeling good — really laying it down. Course I got a few under my belt but I'm still real stable. Some cats got to get like vegetables before they start blowing. Man I don't make that scene though. I'm feeling real good. This new kid on bass is working real fine, still some rough edges but coming real strong. He's a college kid, a good head though. He ain't wise and he don't talk down to you. I blew a gig in Hammond once with some college boys — strictly cubical — but Marty, he's got a lot of himself in that bass. He lays it down.

Well, we're ready for another number when Ruthie walks up. She's the blond waitress who just got divorced. She says some guy would like to hear "Misty." Well, Mousie turns around and tells us

to do "Misty" — like we couldn't hear Ruthie ourselves. What a guy that Mousie. So we start blowing and I'm thinking, "Hell, everybody wants 'Misty.' Man, that must be the favorite of ten million people."

George is taking the lead on the first chorus on piano. George sounds real good I'm thinking. Some nights when his old lady starts bugging him he just don't cut it. But tonight old George is giving Garner a run for his money. Maybe if he hadn't got married he could blow like Garner or Shearing every night.

Now Mousie takes the second chorus and man is he gunking it up — triple tonguing, the whole bit. Mousie will make your butt tired now and then, especially on a request tune. He don't sound bad though. Most people dig the way Mousie blows that horn.

So we finish the set and I start climbing down off the stage. Marty and I head for our table in the back and George heads right for the john. That damn George sure has weak kidneys. Of course they're probably shot from too much boozin'. With a wife like his I guess he's got a right to booze. Mousie is still fumbling with a mute or something. Man he can make you nervous.

Me and Marty sit down. He lights up a weed and I loosen my tie a little. There's a tune going through my head and I'm trying to think of the title. I know Basie did an arrangement of it a few years back but I can't think of it. By the time Mousie sits down

Ruthie walks over and says the guy who requested the tune wants to buy us a drink, I order Cutty Sark and water. Mousie and Marty order beers. I feel kinda cheap; the guys probably think I'm taking advantage of his good nature.

I'm telling Marty about this broad I'd seen in the cocktail lounge when Ruthie brings our drinks. Mousie picks up the glass and toasts the guy who bought. He is a big guy with a ring on his little finger. His wife ain't bad but she's caked with make-up and she looks a little stiff. Mousie gives the guy a big grin. Man that Mousie thinks he can really smile. Some dame must have told him he had a nice smile one time or another because he really thinks he has a Hollywood smile.

I take a few sips and look around the joint. Goerge is just coming from the john and Ruthie greets him with his drink. Old Ruthie knows what George would have ordered — a straight slug of Canadian Club. George half smiles then cocks his head and belts down the shot. He don't even flinch. I'm thinking about his kidneys again; man they must be shot.

Well I take a few more slugs and Mousie starts jabbing me in the ribs. I'm telling him to quit buggin' me, but he says we got to go back to work. I finish my drink and start walking over to the stage. I'm thinking, "Man that crumby bartender really waters down those drinks when they're for the band." I never did like that fat idiot anyway.

Now we're all up on the stage ready to blow when in walks this couple. The guy is a big, ugly Greek or Dago with that crumby black hair — all curly and greasy. He looks like a real crude moron. But the chick is real class — I mean tough as hell blonde with a real fine body. You can tell she's got real class. I'm wondering what a nifty broad like her is doing out with a creep like she's with. Well, he must have coins I'm thinking.

Well, Mousie calls a tune out and we start blowing. This couple walks over to a table near the stage. Usually, those tables fill up last because nobody likes to sit near the band stand because that stupid show-off Mousie's got to play so damn loud. The crude one helps the chick sit down and they order.

We're about thirty-two bars into the number when I glance over at Marty. Man he's really digging this chick hard. I kind of laugh because I know when you start out playing in joints you go ape for the chicks then later you calm down. You get used to it. But I got to admit this chick is something. Maybe she's a model and the big is her agent.

So we play a few more tunes and old Marty boy is really checking her out. Then, I see the big guy start scowling and I'm thinking he must see old Marty diggin' this chick.

Well, we finish the set and start off the stage when the big guy gets up and walks over toward

Marty. I lay my watch on the bass drum cause I'm thinking this big fool might start something with little Marty. George is already in the john and Mousie is buffing his horn with a cloth he keeps in his case.

Well, sure enough the ugly Dago stops Marty halfway to the table and I can see scarlet moving up the nape of his neck. Marty looks like he's trying to explain to the ape but he just keeps jabbing his crumby index finger in Marty's chest. Marty's starting to look a little worried. The joint gets real quiet now that everybody starts realizing what might happen.

Then I see that goofy Mousie jump off the stage and start over toward Marty and the ape. I'm thinking I should go get Harry but before I can think any more about it I see old Marty crumbling to the floor. Some broad screams and the ape's chick looks real hacked. Then, Mousie looks real teed-off and starts yelling in his real high voice. That's why he's called Mousie cause of his voice. Well the big ape swings around from Marty's body and really cold cocks Mousie; and would you know it he knocks him right through my bass drum. When I see this I really get ticked. I ain't much for fighting but seeing Marty get dropped and then my bass drum getting smashed, well I'm pretty mad. So I run over and take a cut at the ape. Well, my aim ain't too hot so I hit him in his damn greasy head and I can feel my hand start throbbing like hell. Then I look up and

that's the last thing I remember 'til Harry threw that water on me.

Well any way, Mickey, that's why I need the twenty. I got to get my drum fixed so I can start working again. Soon as I get paid next week I'll pay you back.

Ralph's grimy fingernails were accented by the white paper he held. He rested his bony shoulders against the coke machine outside Harold's Service Station, where he worked. The early morning air was chilled. With his free hand he buttoned up his denim jacket. Soon the farmers would be in for gas for their tractors and trucks.

"C'mon, Ralph. Help me move this oil drum."

"Wait, Harold. Look, I got a letter from Marty."

"Oh, yeah. How is he?"

"Listen . . ."

Dear Bro,

The city is really swell. We're playing in a real nice club. The guys are great. Last Saturday there was a big fight. I even got punched but I'm okay. (Don't tell ma) I hope Harold is treating you okay. Say hello to everyone. I'll be home for Peggy's birthday. Also tell ma that Uncle Will and Aunt Ada are taking good care of me. Well I have to go practice.

See you soon,

Marty

P.S. Please send me that seven bucks I lent you. I could use it now.

FROM A BRICK WALL

by
Gerald
Heimann

Scaling the wall — the pismire —
Six legs pumping

Stopping

Starting —

Cannot see, cannot know
That canyon yawns inches from him now
And but inches from the ground.

Then stop!

Searching antennae feel for footing
Finding none, searchin on
Following the edge, running,

halting,

turning,

Never yielding to the sensibility of returning to the ground.

Then it's found and bridged

And again it's upward,

upward

upward

Mortar,

Brick,

Mortar,

Brick

As he climbs.

But then a slip —

A fall!

Though unscathed, he once again

Begins the ascent,

Is confronted with the same and similar obstructions

As again

Scaling the wall — the pismire —

Six legs pumping

Stopping

Starting —

Wending perpendicularly

Totally enrapt in climbing the pyramid —

The top.

And what

When there?

Climb, rush up, never stop;

Go, go over stone, mortar, brick and brick. —

Social status, always climbing

Hypocrite;

Better Job, better pay

Higher pay, larger home

Leisure time —

And the ant's name was Babbitt.

Step back from the wall, take a better view

And see the hordes climbing the wall

Covering every inch, grasping, wrenching for one step higher;

Some merely mechanically,

Some thinking, nonetheless climbing,

A few knowing,

Knowing!

But . . .

And there is Manheim looking up
from grass level

Taking those first steps,

Ascending;

The personification of the hypocritic horde

Of which he speaks.

But in mind thinks he:

"Climb not for summit sake

But your summit;

Ascend not with others

But for them —

And —

Is he Babbitt?

answer!

"Father"
i said aloud
and
received
no answer.
"Help me"
i pleaded
and
only became
a voice
in stillness.
"My love"
i screamed
and
was answered by
echoes only.
"God"
i cried
on the edge of despair
and
heard in return
"creature."

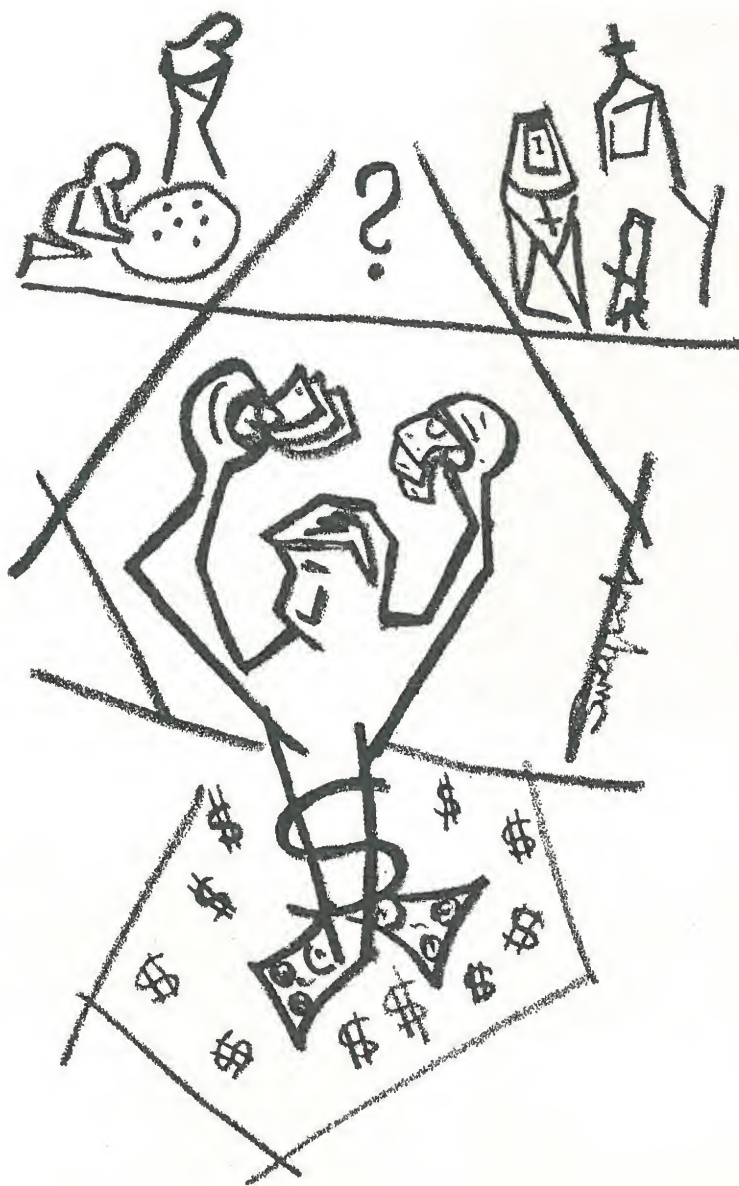
Bradley R. Uhlenhake



the word

the milk white
face
of the yawning moon
radiated inspiration.
it hung
waiting for a
word to arise from
our wandering race.
i tried
o Lord i tried
but could not
in all my searchings
discover it.
then
in a hallow dream
i walked on
coal black fireescapes
and tripped on
"love."
and it is yours
the creative word —
"love."

Bradley R. Uhlenhake



Big Boys Don't Cry

"Timmy, why did God make you?" Sister Martha was now conducting her catechism class.

Timmy Johnson struggled and fiddled with his catechism. And with mock severity, Sister ordered "No peeking."

"Yes s'ter." Suddenly his eyes lit up. "To know, love, and serve Him, s'ter."

"Very good, Timmy," she squealed as if her entire day had been made successful. "Come up here and get your reward."

He hopped from his desk and scrambled up to the front of the room to receive his gold star. From Sister's desk, Timmy bounded over to the class scoreboard, and with an enthusiastic flourish of the arm, plastered the star in his row. Then he stepped back and looked at the scoreboard for a moment.

"Well, Linda and Kathy are still ahead of me," he thought, "but I'm still ahead of Ralph, that's for sure."

He literally strutted back to his place.

"Yes, Marge. Jack Reynolds just called? O.K. Send him in when he gets here."

The great marble - shooting championship was nearing a close. Tim Johnson, eight years old, representing Winthrop Avenue, was shooting a close second behind Ralph (the Rifle) Collins, eight years old from Parker street. The gallery was tense because there were only five marbles left and

three points separating the competitors. Johnson had just missed a crucial carom; then "the Rifle" aimed his shooter. Bang! Bang! Bang Bang! Bang! Collins had won in the clutch and the crowd went wild!

"Hey, Ralph! We weren't playing for keeps, were we?" asked Timmy.

by Charles Reynard

"Heck no! I wouldn't play for keeps with a beautiful collection like that. Here." Ralph poured the sparkling "cat's eyes" and "aggies" into Timmy's sack.

"Thanks, Ralph. It is a good collection isn't it?" Ralph and Tim were the best of friends.

"Let's race to Ralph's house," one of the spectators suggested. "Then we can make his mom nervous." The motion met with unanimous approval and the hell-raisers were off and running down the street.

"Oh hello, Mr. Reynolds. Mr. Johnson told me to send you right in."

The tall weeds in the corner of the Winthrop Avenue field were stirring. Competing whispers could be heard expounding a half-dozen different military strategies for the day's campaign.

"Shut up!" The biggest boy in

the neighborhood risked the enemy's hearing him. Returning to his whisper, he asked impatiently, "Now who did you elect captain, huh?"

"You, Tony," one of the privates answered.

"OK. Then listen to me. The enemy knows our position now, so we'll have to split up. Ralph, you take half the guys and cover the left flank and, Tim, you take half and cover the right. I'll keep the rest and wait here till you reach your position. Then we'll rush'em. And keep out of sight. Let's go."

Somehow Captain Tony's dividing worked out adequately and the three groups got to their places.

"Now!" The three-part squad went over the top and turned their previous whispers into frantic screams of vengeance. The remarks were almost obscene for eight to ten year olds.

"Get those dirty Krauts!"

"Rotten Japs!"

They had obviously forgotten to decide who they were fighting while making strategy, but whoever it was on the other side of the field emerged and began to charge. The battle lasted about an hour, close to the amount of time needed to kill everybody three times.

"OK, Timmy, you can get up now; the battle's over . . . Aw c'mon, my pants are ripped and I've got to get home . . . Timmy!"

Timmy popped up to a standing position. "Awright, let's go. I was just trying to get you to think

it was more than just playing dead. Good battle, huh?"

"Yeah, sure was."

"Say Jack, how are you? Real good to see you."

"You too, Tim," the ruddy construction foreman replied.

"Well, down to business. This new sub-contract we've been bargaining for is pushing us on price. So I put in a low bid because we need the business. If we get the contract, we'll use 202-B lumber and smaller and fewer nails. That'll save us part of the money we lose in the bid. What do you think?"

Reynolds hesitated. "I don't know. It doesn't sound right and if the housing commission caught us . . ."

"Now we're the best of friends," Johnson interrupted. "So I'll be honest with you, Jack. Sure, there are small risks, but we're not kids. We're not playing around, or trying to get gold stars. This is for keeps. We can't afford the loss."

"I'm still not sure, but you're the boss. I'll take care of it as soon as we get the go-ahead."

"Thanks, Jack. Then if we're lucky, we can start by the end of the week. OK, take it easy."

"See 'ya, Tim."

The paunchy and balding Timothy Johnson, 45 years old, construction tycoon on Main street, reclined in his chair. With an understanding tone in his voice, he said to himself, "Kid stuff, that's all!"

He had the entire situation under control.

WORLD'S FAIR

He said the word "love." He may have referred to his love for the girl he married, for his mother, or even for his car. When he said the word "love," he may have been referring to his hunting dog or the job that a friend set him up with. God knows when he said "love," no matter who or what he referred to, he meant it and he never regretted it. He was never one to regret anything he said, even if it contradicted what he whispered last night in the ear of his job.

Philip Deaver

Today

Today I saw a brook
And did not skip a rock.
Today I read no book
Nor watched the ticking clock.

Today I did not say
To Johnny's good old mom,
"Can he come out and play?
I've got some bubble gum."

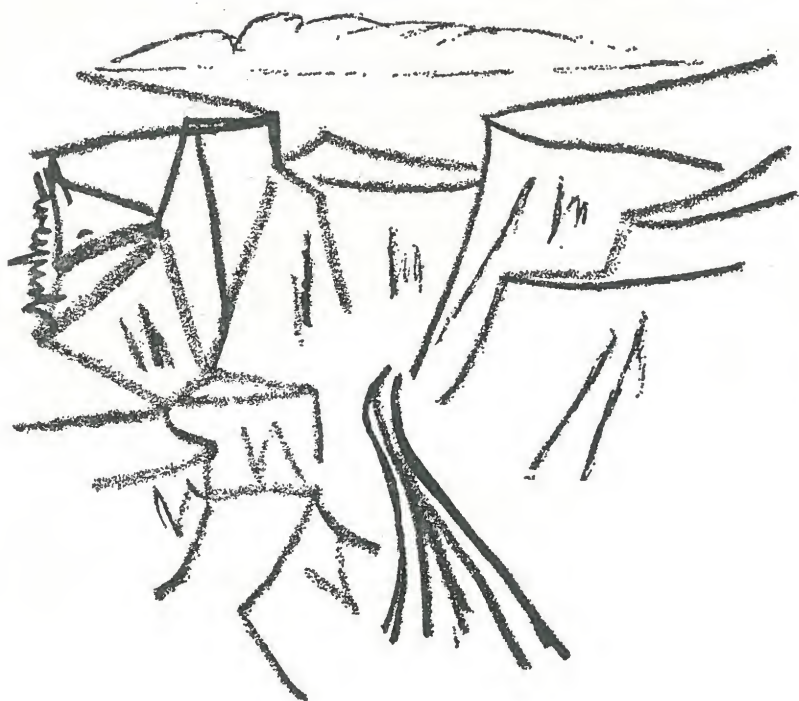
Today I felt no joy
Seeing the little pup
Or spying a bantam boy
Climbing a birch high up.

Today I put away
My surfboard, skis, and sled.
Today I did not play.
Tomorrow I am dead.

Dean Schraufnagel

another

ECHO



by Philip
Deaver

Roger looked down from his ivory-tower, looked down into the shadowy, crumbling canyon below, where rocks lie and minerals tell the truth sometimes. And Roger smiled. And Roger said, "I am in my big ivory-tower forever. No one can call me down. No candy can lure me. No specter can frighten me. I'm here for Good." And be-

low in the canyon there were echoes for a while.

Roger smiled at the halo that "for Good" implied. In fact, alone in a tower as high as the Tree, standing over a canyon with a population of echoes, Roger's smile became a cloudy smile, pre-occupied with "for Good". Roger's lonely tower stood on the vast mirage-cluttered plain, above the canyon but below the hill; and he became envious of the hill and the Tree upon it, and he forgot the echoes below him. He left the rocks and the minerals alone. In the distance Roger saw the only hill and upon

it the only Tree. And he saw that that hill was tormented by the fury of a war between lightning (from Somewhere) and fire (the kind sparked by rubbing two rocks together), a big war, too big for Roger's ivory-tower of stone and too big for Roger. And alone in the tower as high as the Tree, but NOT the Tree nor worthy of the Tree's challenge, Roger raged his jealousy into the canyon below, receiving confusion in a hail of stony echoes.

"For Good!"

"For Good."

But a certain chorus of echoes, from the direction of the hill and upon it the Tree, made sense.

"Go home, Roger, there's a war going on. You're just another echo. Leave your tower for Good."

So Roger patched up his side where he had cut himself with a lance, climbed down, and walked away, forgotten as every echo will be.

The Steal

by John E. Koors Jr.

How can I call it love?
I'm only seventeen.
How can I think of kids, and her?
Without the world's esteem.

Why do I shirk from the word "love"?
But toy with this illusive dream.

Can it be there's a reason or
Am I a fool as it would seem?

Uncertain times can not explain
Nor light of day reveal,
The tied up, confused emotions
Which she and I both feel.
Our youth and premonition, though,
May justify the steal.

The Delicate Balance

by

**Chris
Andres**

**hanley
science
award
winner**

"Little rain falls in summer, and that little is speedily evaporated from the hot earth, leaving the clay as thirsty as ever. I fear it is doomed to perpetual barrenness." Thus wrote Horace Greeley of the American desert during his cross-country travels in 1859.

Actually this description may be too severe in describing the land areas which receive less than ten inches of precipitation a year. Rains are usually seasonal and torrential, but the land remains a desert, for the precipitation is erratic and unevenly distributed.

Two types of topography are recognized: arid flat valleys encircled by mountains and hills, the other has rocky, windswept plateaus interspersed with wide but shallow sandy basins.

When "cloudburst" storms occur, the destructive power of nature is unleashed in sweeping flash floods down through naked gullies, carving canyons deep and wide.

The comparatively large volume of water carries enormous quantities of fine and coarse rock fragments, sculpturing picturesque mesas, pinacles, and buttes to be silhouetted in the sunset. If the torrent descends onto the valley floor before evaporating, velocity is quickly reduced, and the coarse materials sink, forming a mass alluvial fan. In time an entire valley may be filled with deposits.

The lack of moisture and scanty vegetation make the wind a more thorough erosion agent. The fine silt and clay particles, usually less than 0.05 millimeters in diameter are blown high in the air and may be carried from the area and lost into the ocean or deposited on humid lands hundreds of miles away. Wind rolls the larger sand grains along the surface, rubbing and knocking other grains loose until they form a sheet of cutting sand to abrade the rocks and other objects in its path. In places the wind may be so severe as to limit the growth of shrubs and gnarl their structure.

Two types of American desert are distinguished on the basis of temperature, namely, hot and cool deserts. The hot deserts of the Southwest usually have reddish soils beneath their sun-baked surfaces and may be porous because of their dryness. In the cool sagebrush deserts of Idaho the soil is generally gray-looking and packed harder, for there is more rainfall.

Although lifeless looking, deserts are not devoid of life except in the great areas of the African Sa-

hara and regions in Chile. Life is scarce throughout the desert and there is a critical balance in the life-and-death struggle for the small amounts of moisture. Frequently, vegetation is carefully interspaced in the bare areas to avoid dangerous competition. Antibiotics produced in the roots have been found that discourage the invasion of neighboring roots. This is another of nature's methods to conserve precious water, otherwise the close proximity might result in the stunted growth of all the plants. As one moves to a more humid climate these distances become shorter and serve as a gauge for rainfall and possible underground moisture.

Vegetation includes woody plants, shrubs, trees, and perennial evergreen herbs, such as the cacti. They solve water problems in several ways by using their leaves, stems and roots. Leaves are the center of photosynthetic activity. To make sugars they require water and carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide is secured from the air and is easily obtained, but water poses a problem. To utilize the scarce water, the leaves possess many interesting features. Their color is usually gray or gray-green because they have a thick cutinized layer to reduce transpiration or surface evaporation. Creosote or "greasewood" leaves are coated with a pungent resin to protect them from drying. Also leaves may be small and present for brief periods immediately after rains, or they may be absent altogether and

their places taken by the stems as in the cactus species.

The stems of desert shrubs and trees are especially resistant to drying. In cacti they replace the leaves and possess the chlorophyll. The stems also serve as water storage vessels, some of them being 90% water.

The root systems of many desert plants are quite extensive; many have long taproots or a meshwork of fibrous roots near the surface to absorb the sudden rainfall, as in the creosote bushes.

After seeing that there are many plants in the desert, the number of animals present then can be understood. Where plants are found, animals will also live. Plants form the base of all food chains, even though many animals are carnivorous.

Herbivores, or plant eaters, have no serious problems, for they obtain their moisture from the plants they consume. This applies to desert snails, certain insects, and lizards. Insects are "dipped-in-wax" and are certainly protected with waxy substances to prevent the loss of water. Also metabolic water, produced from the breakdown of carbohydrates, can be conserved and used, and in certain cases the ability can be increased to meet the insect's requirements. Rodents, especially the pocket mouse and kangaroo rat, obtain sufficient moisture solely from dry seeds even when succulent food is available. They conserve water by remaining in their burrows during the heat of the day, hunting and feeding at

night. These animals produce very hypertonic urine having about five times as much urea as the most concentrated urine produced by man. The desert tortoise has a unique method for carrying surplus water in two dorsal sacs under his carapace. In larger turtles these may hold a pint of fluid. Lizards and snakes secure moisture from eating insects and other small animals. Mammals, such as coyotes and foxes who must remain near sources of drinking water, are not adapted to the severe conditions because they excrete watery urine and much water is lost in heat regulation. Man, too, eliminates most of the water he consumes, losing it rapidly through the skin, lungs and kidneys.

Desert birds are able to go long periods, obtaining moisture from food, but they need additional water from dew or other water sources.

As stark as this region may seem, the fullness of life and bloom occasionally prevails when delicate bouquets burst forth from the desolate wasteland. Seasons, sometimes several years pass before enough rain falls to germinate waiting seeds. The seeds of annuals wait for this day and spring forth into life and in a matter of days the surface is a vivid carpet of color. With amazing rapidity fertilization occurs and seeds develop. In a few weeks the scene may be desolate again, but nature is content, knowing that the next generation lies sleeping below.

by

Robert

Lofft

CROSSING THE RUBICON IN A SWISS CHEESE BOAT

Arizona in August is a sun-scorched land now and then interrupted by a naked mountain or a dried-up gulch. It was in the north-west part of the Grand Canyon State that it began to happen — the perturbing events that nearly made young Hiram Everett a rich man, and would have except for certain disturbing character traits. For he was emphatically speculative. But he lacked, just as emphatically, a bomb-proof conscience.

He was standing at a traffic light in Kingman, small suitcase in one hand. The other was trying, and so far having no success, to hitch a ride toward Las Vegas. According to the map he must go through Las Vegas on his way to San Francisco. His grandparents lived there, and for the first time in five years he would be seeing them. Only because he had been fired from his summer job in San Antonio, with three weeks still remaining before the start of his last year of college, did he now have the opportunity to visit them.

A decrepit pickup truck lurched to a halt beside the hitchhiker who by this time, because of the hot sun and little sleep, was equally decrepit. Two men, by dress apparently ranchers, sat inside the cab.

"How far ya headed?" asked the man by the right window.

"Las Vegas, but I'll take a ride as far as you're going."

"Jump in the rear. We'll be going that far."

At one o'clock the structures of Kingman faded away. Hiram sat on the floor leaning against the cab's back window, his knees pulled up and wrists locked around them. On his head a battered straw hat shaded his face from the sun.

For fifty miles the road between Kingman and Las Vegas is perfectly straight. On the west side of the highway, a few miles distant, are the Black Mountains. Stretching off from the opposite side is Arizona barrenness, reaching as far as anyone can see. Periodically Hiram would turn around and, holding his hat, he would look over the cab's roof in order to see what was ahead. In making one of his "geographical ascertainments," as he began calling them, he confirmed his conviction that indeed, at sometime or another, the highway would bend. Directly ahead was Mount Wilson and, on the other side, Hoover Dam.

An hour later he awoke to the sound of the truck down shifting into second gear. Ascending Mount Wilson the road weaved around jagged rock walls and coursed near the brink of Black Canyon, the Colorado River flowing several hundred feet below. As the truck reached the mountain's peak, Hiram saw the broad white face of Hoover Dam, a giant concrete wall standing across the canyon. In the distance was Lake Mead with its

blue water enclosed by the russet canyon walls.

The highway continued across the top of the dam. On it several cars were parked, and tourists strolled along the walks gazing at the magnificence about them. The truck pulled into a parking spot, and both ranchers stepped out of the cab.

"You can getch yourself a drink here," said a tall rancher looking at Hiram still seated on the floor. "Imagine you must be a little thirsty."

"I am." Hiram jumped over the truck's side onto the black surface of the road. He walked with the ranchers to one of the drinking fountains near the center of the dam. After drinking, Hiram stood for a moment on the dam's south edge and, looking over the waist-high wall, he saw — nearly one-seventh of a mile below — the swirling waters of the Colorado as it emerged from the hydroelectric turbines. In an instant his head began to spin. He saw himself falling, bouncing down the steep concrete slope.

"Where 'bouts ya coming from?" A voice from somewhere brought him back. A tall rancher, the driver, was beside him.

"From Philadelphia originally, but I've spent most my life in San Antonio — I'm in school there." Hiram was blankly staring out at the crevasse before him. "Right now I'm on my way up to San Francisco to visit relatives. How 'bout yourself," Hiram turned

toward the rancher, "going to Las Vegas?"

"Close to it. Rus and me hope to pick up a horse just north of the city. We'll be hauling her back to Phoenix tonight if all goes well."

They conversed affectedly for a few moments — "Phoenix was a long way to make yet tonight" — Rus eventually joining them from the other side of the road; together they walked toward the old truck. Shortly they were across the dam and into Nevada, the sun setting and Las Vegas near.

Hiram found an inexpensive room — he had only twenty-three dollars — in a tumble-down hotel, an old wooden structure with worn corridor carpets and paint-shedding walls. Because he felt abnormally enterprizing that evening, the fatigue that ran through him ran unnoticed. His mind was preoccupied with the gambling casinos and at 9:30 he found himself in one — a plush establishment located on Las Vegas' famous Strip.

Five-card stud, as played along the Strip, allows the player to see his first two cards for a nickel ante. The first card is dealt face down, the second up. Thereafter the maximum bet on each deal is one dollar.

By two o'clock, after numerous bluffs and a good portion of sheer luck, Hiram Everett sat somewhat proudly before several piles of chips. It looked to be about 350 dollars worth. At least that, he thought. At the same table were the reticent dealer, an attractive

woman in her early thirties, a well dressed man of about fifty, and three or four others who were temporary for only a few minutes. The next hand, Hiram told himself, would be his last. He was tired, and his blue eyes burned from cigarette smoke.

The cards came. Hiram's first one, the down card, was a king. His second was an ace, and he felt confident of at least a high pair. He bet a dollar, the rest of the table matching him. Then sheer luck again — a king for his third card. He bet fifty cents, and the attractive woman raised him a dollar as he had planned. He would sucker them all in, he thought.

With the dealing of the fourth card, all but three players dropped. Hiram's opposition, the well dressed man and the attractive woman, desired to recover their losses at, one might say, any expense. Hiram studied the cards around him. The man had two queens and an ace showing. Possibly he could have three queens, but unlikely. The woman had two tens and a jack up, formidable indeed. Only Hiram did not have a pair showing, a situation he liked.

A round of betting followed the fourth card. Hiram bet with a false hesitancy, appearing as if he were going to fold at any moment. The pot at the beginning of the last deal was about twenty-five dollars.

On the final deal Hiram received a third king. His face almost gave away the surprise and relief which he felt simultaneously.



When the man received an eight and the woman a deuce, Hiram knew that he had won. They, however, were betting that Hiram did not have a king in the hole, that no one could be so lucky, that at best he had two pair. The pot grew, each player raising the other.

The well dressed man hesitated. "I feel like Caesar having just crossed the Rubicon. I'd like to get out, but I sure as hell can't now." When the betting ended, there was 70 dollars in the pot. But neither two pair (aces and queens) nor three tens could beat Hiram's kings.

One of the temporaries, a surreptitious old man with a crafty look in his glossy eyes, had watched the playing silently. Hiram had noticed in this man's glance a certain peculiarity, and as both were leaving the table their eyes met. It was then that Hiram realized that the old man's right eye did not move. It was glass.

When Hiram left the casino to take a taxi to his hotel, the glass-eyed man followed him. On the street the two stood together near the curb, the old man talking.

"You're not such a bad card player, you know. I thought you might be bluffing on that last one though." Neither man looked at the other. Hiram stared down the street, searching for a cab to wave over. The old man stood next to him, hands in his pockets, anxious about something. After a pause the man continued.

"Big fight tomorrow night."

Hiram was perplexed with the stranger's approach. Why talk about the fight — between Gilbett and James, wasn't it? Two ranking heavyweights. He had forgotten that the bout was to be in Las Vegas.

Hiram responded, "Looks as if Gilbett should take it. The odds favor him anyway."

"Don't trust 'em," the old man said.

"Don't trust what?"

"The odds. Half the time they're phony. Say, kid, where ya from?"

"San Antonio." Hiram was suspicious, but didn't reveal it.

"Just checkin'. How'd ya like to invest some of them earnings you made tonight in a fight bet? I can get you a bet on either man in any round. How 'bout it?"

"I thought fight bets were illegal. How do you get away with it?" Hiram had no intention of betting.

"Perhaps so, but half of city hall bets on every fight there is. Don't worry about being paid off. If we didn't pay the winners, we'd be run out in a week."

"Sorry, but I'm not biting tonight. I think my luck may be running out."

"As you say. But if you should change your mind, I'll be inside here all day tomorrow. The old man left, walking slowly up the Strip.

It was about two p.m. when Hiram awoke in his hotel room. For a time he lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, thinking, laughing

to himself. He congratulated himself. An excellent performance, he thought. Caesar did not fair so well last night.

In the bathroom he stood shirtless before the medicine cabinet mirror, complacently observing his sharp features. He had long ago lost the war against narcissism, but with his looks it was a lost war from the beginning. In this way he would rationalize. Slipping out of his shorts, he stepped into the shower.

Only after he had turned the water off and had bent over to dry his lower legs did he become aware of the voices issuing from the air vent at the base of the wall. Hiram paused, and stooping to open the duct, he listened to what was being said in the next room.

"Look — Meifen said to end it in the second, and if you want your cut in the cash, that's where you'd better end it." The voice was rough and belligerent.

"To hell with Meifen! Does he think they're gonna swallo this stunt two times straight? That one-rounder last winter raised enough eyebrows as it was. No one's gonna take two of them in a row."

"They'll take it," the first voice asserted, "because they don't know better. Sorry, but if we want to make any coin at all on this thing, it has to end in the second — with James winning. It's base math. No one expects him to win, especially not in the early rounds. The money's on Gilbert. Now make

sure he gets the word. He's to go down in the second."

"As Meifen desires. But only because he controls our share of the proceeds."

There was a momentary shuffling of feet, the sound of a door opening and closing, and then silence. Hiram fastened a towel around his waist and moved quickly out of the bathroom toward the door of his room. Opening it a crack, he looked with one eye down the corridor. Four men waited at the top of the staircase. One by one they descended.

For several minutes Hiram sat on the bed thinking about the conversation which he had overheard. His first thought was of the boxing commissioner. But why misuse this generous gesture of fate? He dressed hurriedly, and all the way to the Strip the man with the glass eye was on his mind.

He found him at a poker table. After catching the old man's attention, Hiram signaled him to go outside. Together they walked down the sidewalk beneath the hot sun.

"I've been thinking over what you said last night," Hiram began, "and if you're still open, I'd like to place a bet. I think some of that luck may still be with me after all."

The old man appeared interested. "How much ya game for?"

"Is 400 dollars all right?" Hiram replied, feeling sure that it was.

"That's fine. On who and in what round?"

"Well, I'm going for a long shot. How about James in the second?" Hiram made a conscious effort not to arouse suspicion.

The man was silent for a second, and then: "It's your money, kid. I have my car in the lot across the street. We can finish the deal over there."

In the car Hiram gave the man four hundred-dollar bills. In return he received a ticket stub with an address printed on it. "If James should win in the second," the glass-eyed man said, "take this ticket to that address before noon tomorrow. You'll get paid off eleven to one."

It was a hot night. The cigarette and cigar smoke seemed to settle beneath the lights of the open-air stadium. Two fighters, their black bodies already sweating, stood with the referee in the center of the ring. Seated in the loud crowd was Hiram Everett, uneasy for some unknown reason. Perhaps they refixed the fight after his bet. What then? He could never proof anything. But that was nonsense. He would win — win? — was that the word. No. Gain was better. He would gain the 4,400 dollars.

The first round appeared fairly even, although James was staggered near the end. Between rounds Hiram recognized in the fighters' corners the men who had been in the hotel room next to his. He looked for the man with the glass eye but did not see him.

The second round began. For

two minutes the boxers moved around the ring, neither of them throwing a strong punch. The crowd began yelling for action, and suddenly Gilbert was caught with his guard down. James landed a sharp blow on his opponent's jaw and followed with jabs to the body. At that instant the bell sounded.

Hiram stared with disbelief into the ring. Round two was over. James had not won. He sat silently, confused. Round three began. James jumped from his corner, rushing to the center of the ring. But Gilbert remained motionless on his stool, his arms hanging on the ropes. The fight announcer stepped into the ring. "The winner, after two rounds, by a TKO, Ronald James." The crowd was a mixed uproar of cheers and descension. Hiram, however, left the stadium quietly, laughing under his breath. That evening he checked into another hotel.

The next morning, finding the events of the last evening almost beyond comprehension, Hiram walked to the address which was on the ticket. It was a pawn shop in the downtown section of the city. A feeling of apprehension was growing inside of him as he entered the shop. There were no customers inside, only an old proprietor with dry saggy skin about his face. Hiram walked to the counter behind which the proprietor stood.

"I have a ticket here," Hiram said, removing the stub from his shirt pocket. "I was told to bring it to this address."

The man examined the ticket

through the thick lens of his glasses. Then, looking up at Hiram, he asked: "How did you know?"

"Know what?" Hiram was nonplussed.

"That James would win in the second. Who tipped you off? You were the only one to have over fifty dollars bet on it. It takes more than luck to do that."

Hiram groped for words. At last: "I guess you could call it ignorance. I thought James was the favored man. Got things crossed up I guess."

The proprietor discontinued his questioning. Opening a drawer beneath the counter, he removed a thick white envelope and handed it to Hiram. "No need to count it. It's all there." Hiram did not respond except for a nod of his head. With the envelope in his hand he left the pawn shop.

In his hotel room Hiram packed his belongings into the small suitcase. The money — it was all there — he placed inside and snapped the suitcase shut.

Walking quickly around a corner on his way to the bus station, Hiram came face to face with a city policeman. Hiram's breathing was cut short. Instinct said run. But before he could, the policeman politely excused himself and walked on.

Approximately three months later in Carson City, on the night before his appearance in court, the star witness for the prosecution was — very melodramatically — shot through the head. The August fight was ruled valid, and, because of lack of evidence, no members of the gambling syndicate were convicted.

Portrait

Do not look for me in Oxford
Or Cambridge or Vienna
With a head as large and precise
As a computer.

Look instead in the forests
And the lakes
And the bustling streets
And smoke filled cabarets.
My brain is in my eyes,
Ears, hands and skin —
A porous sponge
Soaking in all life may have
To offer.

by Raymond Braun